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Influence of Socio-Demographic Factors on Socio-Cultural Impacts of Ram Fight Viewing: Implications on Leisure and Tourism

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Abstract:

The use of Rams by their owners to engage in a contest called Ram fight has rapidly gained popularity amongst the south western people of Nigeria. Giving the pleasure of entertainment and leisure derived from this unofficial activity and its potential for a type of Animal-Based tourism, this paper studied the socio-demographic factors vis a vis the socio-cultural impacts of the Ram fight and its implications on leisure and tourism. Structured interviews using questionnaires were conducted within 3 areas of Lagos State, Nigeria and the findings indicate that respondents consider ram fight as a nascent tourist attraction in Lagos being a form of leisure that is captivating while majority of the correspondents also agreed that ram fight viewing served to foster religious harmony between Christians and Muslims in Lagos as well as positively engaging the youths who consider it as another form of entertainment. This work recommends that the potential of this leisure activity be unlocked and promoted as a tool for leisure practice and tourism development among locals.

Keywords: Ram, animal-based tourism, leisure, entertainment, tourism development, and "Ileya" festival

1. Introduction

Tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited (WTO). Cultural heritage tourism has been defined as that type of tourism which includes all movement of persons to specific cultural attractions, such as heritage sites, artistic and cultural manifestations, arts and drama outside their normal place of residence (Richard, 1996). Silberberg (1995) on the other hand viewed cultural tourism as visits by persons from outside the host community motivated wholly or interest in the historical, artistic and scientific or lifestyle offerings of a community, region, group or institution. Cultural heritage tourism is therefore the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs.

Animal based tourism is an emerging aspect of tourism which if well developed, has the potentials of providing leisure and fun for humans. Appreciation of animals by tourists has been reported by a number of authors (Asian Captive Elephant Working Group, 2017; Bansiddhi et al., 2018). The welfare of animals involved in this emerging aspect of tourism has been of concern due to management factors including the introduction of stress to animals (Bansiddhi et al., 2019). With the exception of cattle, sheep form the highest number of ruminants reared in West Africa. The population of sheep in sub-Saharan Africa is estimated at 127 million (Winrock International, 1992) and that of the humid tropics at over 20 million with about 80% of these in Nigeria (Charray et al., 1992; Gatenby, 2002; Olopade et al., 2005, Olukole, 2010). Uda rams, also known as Northern Nigerian Fulani or Bororo are found in Northern Nigeria, Southern Niger, Central Chad, Northern Cameroon and Western Sudan. They are meat breeds of rams with distinctive markings, the front half of the body is usually black or brown and the back is often white (Olukole, 2010). Rams play important religious and socioeconomic roles in Nigeria, especially during Eid-el-Kabir celebrations.

Annually, Muslims all over the world celebrate Eid-el-Kabir or what is popularly known as "Ileya" Festival among the Yoruba People of Nigeria. Ram sacrifice is a major feature of this festival and a key aspect of the celebration is that the meat of the ram offered sacrificially is divided into three parts: a portion of the meat goes to the family; the second portion is given to relatives, friends and neighbours while the other portion is given to the poor and needy. An obvious social aspect of this festival in Nigeria is the ram fight during which Muslims bring out their rams to nearby fields primarily for grazing and exhibition. On such occasions, rams are engaged in a contest of superiority by owners who make them fight on the streets, the stadia, beaches or other designated areas such as open fields to the leisure of spectators. The owner of the champion ram usually enjoys the hail of spectators apart from the feeling of superiority. On many occasions, some people place gamble on rams they feel would win the day. The major determinants of success in ram contest are size of the animal with the shape and size of the horn. Horns in animals are useful for display and combat (Lull, 1933; Sampson et al., 1997); defense against predators (Hatcher et al., 1907); thermoregulation and as aids in knocking down vegetation (Farke, 2004).

The Uda ram represents horns of varying shapes and conformations: twisted with inclining at almost 180° angle from the base of the horn to its tip. A number of them could be twisted giving a sigmoid or almost a U-shape. The tips of the horns were usually pointed and hardy while their bases ranged from round to sphere in shape. There is a dearth of research information on domestic animal-based tourism. In Nigeria, ram fight is fast becoming a major feature during the Id-el Kabir celebrations, hence its potential as a nascent tourist attraction. This study was designed to investigate into the socio-cultural aspects of ram fight, especially those of Uda Rams, usually sacrificed during Id-el Kabir celebrations in Nigeria with the view of exploring its tourism potentials.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Area

Lagos, State, Nigeria (figure 1), was chosen as the study area. The city is the most populous in Nigeria with diverse socio-cultural and religious activities apart from being the hub of economic activities in Nigeria. For the purpose of even distribution, Lagos State was divided into 3 major areas; Lagos Island, Lagos mainland and Lagos suburbs. A total of 500 respondents were interviewed using prepared questionnaire to investigate the socio-cultural impacts of ram fight. The sample for the study included residents who turned out to view ram fight at different locations within the 3 areas of Lagos State. The random sampling method of data collection was used for the study.

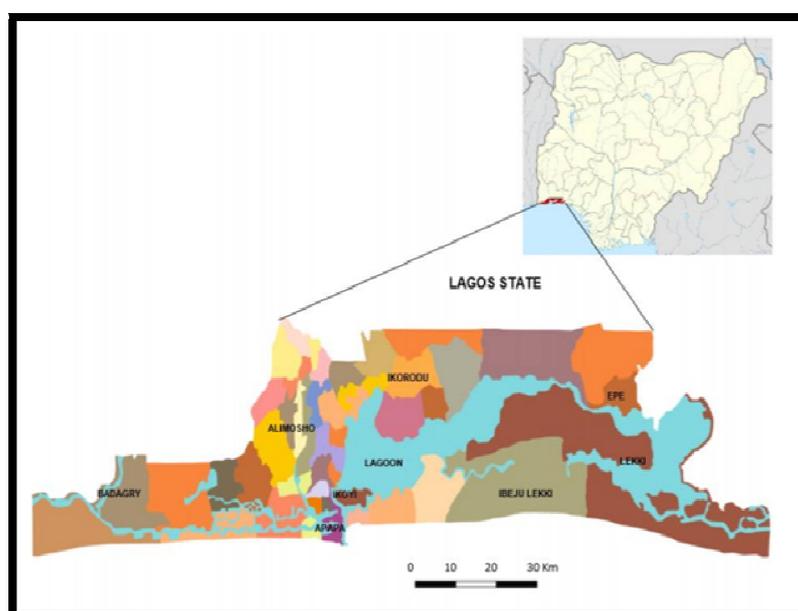


Figure 1: Map of Nigeria Showing the Major Areas of Lagos State
Adapted from Oteri and Ayeni, 2016

2.2. Data Collection

The Research type adopted was qualitative, using the questionnaire instrument. 20 aspects of socio-cultural impacts of ram fight were investigated in the questionnaire. These aspects were anchored by the 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree) as reported by Kim and Patrick, 2005.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data obtained were expressed as mean and standard deviation using the Graphpad prism for statistical analysis.

2.4. Results

Majority of the rams engaged in contests during the course of this study have rich investment of horns (figures 1 and 2). The Profile of respondents from the study indicates that majority were male 76.4% with age group 20-40 forming 42.2% of them (table 1). 79% of viewers at ram fight venues were singles while 17.8% were married (table 1). The educational status of viewers at ram fight venues were well distributed, those with secondary school education formed the bulk of viewers (42%) while those with tertiary-education were 30%. Views with primary education were 24% of the total respondents while those without any formal education formed 4% of the respondents. On the basis of respondent's religious background; Christianity, Islam and traditional religious were 30%, 59% and 10.4% of the respondents respectively (table 1).

Table 2 presents the respondents perception of socio-cultural impact of ram fight. Findings indicate that respondents consider ram fight as a nascent tourist attraction in Lagos being a form of leisure that is captivating (table 2). Majority of the correspondents also agreed that ram fight viewing served to foster religious harmony between Christians and Muslims in Lagos as well as positively engaging the youths who consider it as another form of entertainment. One

major opinion that was unanimously agreed upon by respondents was that there were usually feelings of superiority for owners of winner rams after ram contests. Other positive aspects of ram fight include being an incentive for keeping ram, positive economic impacts and its educative role.

However, the respondents were of the opinion the rights of such animals were in a way abused in ram fight as some get injured in the process. Also, some of the respondents were of the opinion that any injured ram becomes unfit for religious sacrifice. Nevertheless, respondents unanimously agreed that there was the need to better package ram fight to help it serve the purposes of leisure and entertainment among youths in Lagos State.



Figure 2: The Cranial View of the Uda Ram Showing Its Rich Investment of Horn



Figure 3: Ram Fight on a Beach in Lagos, Nigeria

Demographic variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	382	76.4
Female	118	23.6
Total	500	100
Age		
5-12	107	21.4
13-19	152	30.4
20-40	211	42.2
41-Above	30	6
Total	500	100
Marital Status		
Single	89	17.8
Married	396	79.2
Widow/Divorced	15	3
Total	500	100
Education		
No formal Education	20	4
Pry. Education	120	24
Sec. Education	210	42
Tertiary Education	150	30
Total	500	100
Religion		
Christianity	150	30
Islam	298	59.6
Traditional	52	10.4
Total	500	100

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

S/N	Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	A form of leisure	4.10	0.63
2.	Captivating Scene	4.31	0.51
3.	Entertainment	4.07	1.03
4.	Recreational opportunity	3.82	1.65
5.	Foster Religious Harmony	4.01	0.56
6.	Engagement of youths	4.03	0.61
7.	Human satisfaction	3.51	1.72
8.	Educative	3.92	0.98
9.	Feeling of Superiority for owners of winner Rams	4.4	0.51
10.	Sense of loss for owners of loser Rams	2.3	0.71
11.	Infliction of injury on animals	3.0	1.65
12.	Respect for animal rights	2.1	0.65
13.	Incentive for ram keeping	3.5	1.21
14.	Positive Economic Implications	4.3	0.42
15.	Positive Religious Implications	2.8	1.62
16.	Need for better packaging of ram fight	4.3	0.42
17.	As a nascent tourist attraction	4.5	0.31
18.	Encouragement of Crime	1.8	0.65
19.	Cultural Conservation Measures	3.8	1.63
20.	Promotion of Culture	4.1	0.65

Table 2: Socio-Cultural Impacts of Ram Fight in Nigeria

3. Discussion

This study has shown that ram fight viewing is entertaining and can offer some levels of leisure and tourism to humans. The findings confirm the report of Bansiddhi *et al.* (2019) on the involvement of animals in leisure and tourism. Respondents' view of ram fight as a means of leisure and entertainment shows the positive socio-culture impact of the activity among youths in Lagos. There is general consensus that leisure activities are freely chosen and 'non-obligatory' in nature, thereby excluding time spent at school and doing school work after school, time spent on household chores and time spent in paid employment. However, when it comes to non-obligatory activities, categories such as sport, media related activities, performance activities and community service activities have been used (Byrne *et al.*, 2006). These activities are sometimes further described in terms of whether they are shared or solitary, active or passive activities, or relaxed or constructive activities. A final important distinction relates to whether free-time activities are structured and organized or unstructured and informal, involving 'hanging out' and socializing (Caldwell and Darling, 1999; Byrne *et al.*, 2006).

The demographic profile of this study shows that ram fight viewing is mostly dominated by the male gender. This observation explains the role of the female gender in the culture of the Yoruba People of the Southwestern Nigeria where they are more involved in indoor activities than the males. Again, the adventurous events involved in ram fight can be said to be responsible for its male dominated nature. In terms of age, youths dominated viewers at ram fight scenes. This can be approached by the level of responsibility and the love of fun for which youths are known for in every community throughout the world. One in every five people in the world is an adolescent (between the ages of 10 and 19). A third of Nigeria's total estimated population is youth between the ages of 10 and 24 (Population Reference Bureau, 2000). Leisure and recreation have come to be recognized to play a vital role in adolescent development, being beneficial to young people because of the opportunities for socialization and peer interaction that leisure activities offer and because of the psychological as well as physical health benefits (Byrne *et al.*, 2006). Moreover, participation in organized leisure and recreation by young people is also seen as having positive benefits for society since it reduces the amount of time available for engagement in anti-social behaviour (Caldwell and Darling, 1999). In line with the level of family responsibility and societal expectations, it is not unexpected that majority of viewers interviewed were not married. The fact that more than 70% of viewers had at least secondary education shows the influence of western education on leisure and fun among youths. Education for nation building is a design to improve character and service delivery of teachers, learners and the citizenry. It involves the processes for building and sustaining human relationship by assessing, anticipating and stating the implied needs of the populace (Amali and Jekayinfa, 2013).

Also, the religious affiliation of rams during the Eid-el-Kabir festival explains why Muslims form the bulk of viewers at ram fight venues. Ram fight viewing as a source of leisure is a potential tool of religious harmony among youths in Nigeria as both Muslims and non are usually engaged in it. The promotion of culture of coexistence and understanding among youths opined as one major advantage of ram fight viewing is a strong factor in societal integration in the face of diverse vices. Ram fight viewing is therefore one of the yet to properly harnessed avenues for cultural promotion and positive values building among youths. The problem of religious intolerance in Nigeria especially among youths can be reduced to the barest minimum if youths of different religious beliefs can be united through leisure and entertainment. Religious intolerance has been defined as 'hostility towards other religions, as well as the inability of religious adherents to harmonize between the theories and the practical aspect of religion' (Balogun 1988). It encompasses bigotry, which is the

obstinate and intolerant devotion to one's opinions and prejudices, especially the exhibition of intolerance and animosity toward persons of differing beliefs (Baird and Rosenbaum 1999). Religious intolerance has been identified as the major source of religious conflict/violence in all societies existing as long as the history of mankind, and permeating all forms of human civilizations, with attendant destructive tendencies (Gofwen, 2004).

Another major finding of this study is the role of ram fight in the reduction of youth restiveness since the activity not only engages them but also gives them a sense of satisfaction. Youths are filled with energy and when this energy is positively channeled or guarded, they are highly productive, and hence they are likely to contribute to the overall development of the society (Igbo and Ikpa, 2013). On the other hand, when the energy is negatively channeled, restiveness and its resultant effects are likely to be felt. Chika and Onyene (2010) observed that to be restive is to be unable to stay still, or unwilling to be controlled especially because one is bored or not satisfied with certain decisions, changed or existing laws considered to be unfavourable. Youth restiveness involves the combination of actions, conducts and behaviour which constitutes unwholesome, socially unacceptable behaviour exhibited by youths in the society (Igbo and Ikpa, 2013).

Accordingly, to findings, ram fight viewing drastically reduces the number of youths aimlessly hanging around the streets during public holidays in Lagos. 'Hanging around' on the street has different meanings for young people and adults (Byrne, et al., 2006). Adults often perceive young people hanging around on the street as a potential threat to public order and as a form of resistance to adult control and power (Valentine et al., 1998). Problematic youths have been identified as a group of young people who are not growing up as they should, who live in certain geographical areas, and have identifiable social characteristics (Wyn and White, 1997; Byrne, et al., 2006). Unfortunately, many youths perceive the street as an independent space where they are able to establish themselves away from the 'prying eyes' of adult society. Moreover, it has been reported that teenagers' 'hanging around' is one form of youth resistance to adult power (Corrigan, 1979). The street is depicted as an autonomous arena for the socialization of young people, particularly peer socialization, and studies continue to find that 'hanging around' on the street in the company of peers continues to be the preferred free-time activity of young people (Colozzi and Giovannini, 2003).

In conclusion, the positive sociocultural impacts of ram fight viewing notwithstanding poses potential injuries on the animals involved. As such, the rights of the ram are abused by the persons engaging them in contests. Also, the absence of total religious acceptance poses another threat to the development of ram fight viewing in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the numerous positive sociocultural impacts of ram fight viewing qualify it as leisure activity that can be harnessed towards economic gain and hence a potential local tourism product if well packaged. It is therefore recommended that ram fight viewing be better organized and package for its sociocultural and potential economic benefits.

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